

Background on Japanese perfins

The third edition of *Japanese Perfins*, Sunao Adachi's standard reference work, comes with a partial English translation that makes it about ten times as useful to the average American collector than either the first or second editions.

In addition to making the catalog itself more useful, the translation provides some background material that has not been shared with American collectors before, at least not in the *Bulletin*.

Adachi's catalog lists, in addition to perfins, the embossed and handstamped security endorsements of Japan. The first security endorsement apparently was an embossed "seal" applied to stamps by the Oriental Bank Corporation of Yokohama. The date of first use is unknown because the stamp is cancelled with a cork chop showing the Y of Yokohama.



The first perfin apparently was Adachi type G-41 used by the North China Herald in Shanghai. Again the date of first use is unknown because the cancel is a cork chop propellor type used by the Japanese post office in Shanghai.



The first positive date of use is June 29, 1891, when Hong Kong Shanghai Bank's Yokohama Branch began to use Adachi type H-43. Soon after that many foreign companies in Yokohama and Kobe began using perfins. Japanese companies during that period began using small rubber stamps to serve the same purpose, largely because there were no perforators made in Japan and few perforators were arriving from overseas.

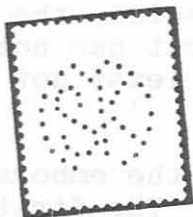
As the perforators did begin to arrive (Sloper's salesman apparently called in Japan during this period), the Japanese post office set down some regulations on September 11, 1908.

1. Users of perforated or embossed stamps must make an application showing their name, address, occupation, and the post office(s) where they wished to use the stamps.
2. The application must show clearly the perfin or the embossed design.
3. If the stamps are to be used in two or more postal areas, separate applications must be made in each.
4. A sample stamp must be affixed on a slip of paper 5x15 centimeters and the slip must show the name, address, and occupation of the user. A slip must be provided for each post office in a given postal area.
5. An application fee of 5 yen was required (it cost only 0.03 yen to mail a letter).
6. The application was good for only five years at which time it must be renewed for another 5 yen.

It should be noted that the 1908 regulations made it illegal to use handstamps as security endorsements.

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Perfins continued to be used widely through World War II, but when the war ended, so too did the widespread use of perfins. Many machines undoubtedly were destroyed in war-time bombings; the economic collapse at the end of the war closed many other businesses.



The first perfin authorized after the war was Adachi type G-38, issued to Sunao Adachi and his Philatelic Club on August 10, 1946. Some other users were renewed during the period which followed, but before perfins could again become popular, the postage meter arrived and the end of perfins was in sight.

On June 1, 1961, the Japanese postal system refused to accept further applications for perfins and declined to renew existing applications. As a result, the use of perfins ceased by the middle 1960s.

Clearly, the existence of the small slips of paper at post offices bearing an example of each authorized perfin along with the name and address of the user has been most helpful in identifying perfin users. Some of the slips have found their way into the hands of collectors, but many of the slips were destroyed in the war and they are far from plentiful.

It is interesting to note that the Japanese post office recognized three specific objectives in the use of perfins, embossing, and handstamping: to prevent the theft of stamps, to prove that the correspondence actually came from the sender listed on the cover (a problem with stationery theft?), and as advertising. The last objective is quite opposite to the philosophy of the British and American post offices, both of which considered advertising on stamps to be just a bit gauche.



One other tidbit gleaned from the English translation of Adachi: U. S. design #23 is listed in Adachi as the pattern of Mitsui and Company, which had a New York City branch. Adachi confirms the suspicion of George Fisher (see the June 1980 *Bulletin*).

The Adachi catalog is available to Perfins Club members for \$10 per copy postpaid. Please send your orders to Floyd A. Walker, Box 82, Grandview, MO 64030.

One further note: Adachi apparently has not done with the third edition what he did with the second...he has not changed the numbering system. A spot check shows uniformity of numbers between the second and third editions. What he has added is considerable information about users and some illustrations of unusual philatelic prizes. Even a moderate Japanese perfins collection justifies the \$10 investment.